



**IZone-English I Progress Monitoring
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Subject: English Language Arts

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Student Name: _____

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School Name: _____

In The Wave, author Susan Casey describes an extreme sport and her fascination with it. Read the text. Then, answer the questions.

The Wave

by Susan Casey

As I watched the surfers launch themselves into the churning ocean and paddle toward the break, I worried for each of them. Their sport seemed more gladiatorial than athletic, like showing up for work each day to grapple with bull elephants.

Which is why, a few years later, I was stunned to see a photograph of a man riding a wave more than twice the size of Sunset,¹ somewhere in the sixty-foot range. The surfer was Laird Hamilton, a six-foot-three, 215-pound twenty-eight-year-old from Hawaii who looked completely at ease inside a barrel² as tall as an office building. His blond hair whipped back in the spray; his muscular arms were spread wide for balance as he plummeted down the wave on a tiny board. He had classically handsome features, chiseled and intense, but no fear showed on his face, only rapt focus. Looking at the picture, I didn't understand how any of this was possible.

Since surfing became popular in the mid-twentieth century, faces in the forty-foot range have represented the outer limits of human paddling abilities. Anything bigger is simply moving too fast; trying to catch a sixty-foot wave by wind milling away on your stomach is like trying to catch the subway by crawling. Never mind, though, because even if you could catch it, there would be no way to ride it. Too much water rushes back up the face of a giant wave as it crests, sucking you, the hapless human (not enough momentum), and your board (too much friction) over the falls. So while the most popular surf spots quickly became so overrun that fist fights erupted in the water, all over the world the most impressive waves were going to waste. To Hamilton and his friends, this was unacceptable. The rules had to change, and a new system invented. So they came up with a technique called tow surfing.

Borrowing ideas from windsurfing and snowboarding, they created shorter, heavier surfboards with foot straps, and thinner, stronger fins that sliced through the water like knives. Then they added Jet Skis and water-ski ropes to the mix, using them to tow one another into perfect position at thirty miles per hour. In the optimal spot, just as the wave began to peak, the rider would drop the tow rope and rocket onto the face. The driver, meanwhile, would exit off the back. Using this method, with its increased horsepower and redesigned gear, a surfer could theoretically catch the biggest waves out there. Riding them—and surviving if you fell—was another story.

Hamilton was the test pilot, followed immediately by other surfers and windsurfers in his circle: Darrick Doerner, Brett Lickle, Dave Kalama, Buzzy Kerbox, Rush Randle, Mark Angulo, and Mike Waltze. Nicknamed the Strapped Crew, they experimented on the outer reefs of Oahu and Maui, far beyond the crowds. “No one was there,” Hamilton said. “No one had ridden waves this size. It was the unknown. It was like outer space or the deep sea. We didn't know if we were going to come back.”

Anything involving giant waves qualifies as a risky pursuit, but tow surfing seemed to invite disaster. The sport's learning curve was a series of hard lessons, and the price of falling was high. It included dislocated

shoulders, shattered elbows, and burst eardrums; broken femurs, snapped ankles, and cracked necks; lacerated scalps, punctured lungs, and fractured arches; hold-downs that Brett Lickle described as “sprinting four hundred yards holding your breath while being beaten on by five Mike Tysons.” As for stitches, Hamilton “stopped counting at 1,000.”

Regardless of its dangers (or maybe because of them), tow surfing’s popularity and visibility grew throughout the 1990s, the surfers venturing onto more treacherous waves every year. They tinkered with equipment. They refined their techniques. Working in teams of two—a driver and a rider—they figured out how to rescue each other in behemoth surf. As the stakes got higher and the margin for error got slimmer, a kind of natural selection occurred. Riders who’d glimpsed their own mortality a little too closely drifted to the sidelines. At the other end of that spectrum was Hamilton. Watching him, you got the feeling that no wave was out of reach. The more intimidating the conditions, the more he seemed to thrive in them.

Then in July 2001 a surf impresario named Bill Sharp issued a challenge. “For 2700 years,” his press release read, “the Homeric [sic] epic known as the Odyssey has been associated with beautiful-but-deadly temptresses, forgetful lotus-eaters, and scary, one-eyed monsters. But now thanks to surf wear giant Billabong, it’s associated with an even scarier monster: the elusive 100-foot wave.” The company, the press release continued, would offer a prize of \$500,000 to any man who rode one. This payday was exponentially larger than anything surfing had seen; millions more would come from sponsors in the wake of the triumph. A select group of two teams would be invited to participate, a crew Sharp referred to as “the Delta Force of surfing.”

It was a sexy frontier, defined by a nice round number. Marketing that number was Sharp’s intention; he noted that he’d sold the hundred-foot-wave Odyssey contest, originally named Project Sea Monster, to Billabong in less than fifteen minutes. Prone to flourishes of hype, Sharp delivered vivid sound bites: “The Odyssey is Jacques Cousteau meets Evel Knievel³ meets Crocodile Hunter meets Jackass,” he said. And almost overnight the idea of the hundred-foot wave became the media grail, tow surfing’s equivalent of a moon landing.

There were a couple of snags. First, was it physically possible? No one knew how riding a hundred-foot wave might differ from, say, riding a seventy-five-foot wave. As they grow in size, waves increase dramatically in speed and energy. At what point would the forces overwhelm the equipment, or the surfers? “The 100-foot wave would probably kill anyone who fell off it,” Time magazine wrote. Honolulu’s then-ocean safety chief, Captain Edmund Pestana, agreed: “It’s a deadly scenario for everyone involved.” The trade journal TransWorld SURF Business was blunt: “You’re asking these surfers to take huge risks for our titillation.”

Next, even if a surfer wanted to take his chances, finding the wave was a problem. Although they were no longer considered imaginary, hundred-foot waves were not exactly kicking around within Jet Ski range. Further complicating things, for tow surfing’s purposes not just any hundred-foot wave would do. The enormous seas the Discovery⁴ encountered; the huge freaks that pop up to batter oil rigs—these are unsuitable, despite their great height. Waves that exist in the center of a storm are avalanches of water, waves mashed on top of other waves, all of them rushing forward in a chaotic jumble.

Surfers need giant waves with a more exclusive pedigree. In their ideal scenario, a hundred-foot wave would be born in a blast of storm energy, travel across the ocean for a long distance while being strengthened by winds, then peel off from the storm and settle into a swell, a steamrolling lump of power. That swell would

eventually collide with a reef, a shoaling bottom, or some other underwater obstacle, forcing its energy upward and sideways until it exploded into breaking waves. And that's where the ride would begin—far enough from the storm's center to be less roiled and choppy, but not so far that its power was too diminished. This was a pretty tall order. If the ocean was a slot machine, rideable sixty- or seventy-foot waves came along about as often as a solid row of cherries⁵. And the perfect hundred-foot wave? Hit that one and the sirens would go off as everyone in the casino stopped what they were doing to gawk, and the staff rolled in palettes to help you haul away your money.

A surfer who intended to participate in the Odyssey, therefore, would be signing up for a global scavenger hunt. Not only would he have to ride the wave, he'd have to scour the oceans to find it, monitoring the weather's every nuance like a meteorologist, and then show up at precisely the right moment toting Jet Skis, safety equipment, surf gear, and photographers along with him—not to mention a highly skilled partner who didn't mind risking his life when called upon to do so. This was a surfing competition the way the Space Shuttle was a plane. "The Odyssey makes climbing Everest look easy," one British journalist wrote. Regardless, Sharp was undeterred. "I think everybody's ready," he said. "Now, on the giant days, there's no wave that anyone's backing down from."

The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks, and Giants of the Ocean by Susan Casey. Copyright © 2010 by Susan Casey. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc. Photograph copyright © Buzz Pictures/Alamy.

1 *Sunset* - a surfing beach in Hawaii known for its large waves

2 *barrel* - the tube-like part of a wave created when a wave breaks

3 *Jacques Cousteau meets Evel Knievel* - references to a famous oceanographer and a daredevil stuntman

4 *Discovery* - a ship that recorded the largest wave ever encountered up to that time (2000)

5 *a solid row of cherries* - a rare winning combination of symbols in a slot machine

1 What is the **main** purpose of paragraphs 3–5?

- (A) to introduce the major athletes in tow surfing
- (B) to describe the accidents associated with tow surfing
- (C) to identify specialized supplies needed for tow surfing
- (D) to provide background on the development of tow surfing

2 Based on paragraph 5, what is the **main** effect of comparing tow surfing to exploring outer space or the deep sea?

- (A) It highlights the great fame that is possible
- (B) It suggests the intense training that is provided
- (C) It explains the excessive financing that is needed
- (D) It emphasizes the adventurous spirit that is required

3 Read the descriptions of the waves from paragraph 12 in the box below.

A blast of storm energy

A steamrolling lump of power

Exploded into breaking waves

What do the descriptions of the waves **mainly** suggest?

(A) Their force

(B) Their beauty

(C) Their rapid formation

(D) Their increasing frequency

4 Based on paragraph 12, an “exclusive pedigree” refers to waves that are

- (A) part of a continuously rolling surf
- (B) created by a specific set of conditions
- (C) found only in the middle of the ocean
- (D) associated with unique patterns of tides

5 What does paragraph 13 suggest is the **most** crucial part of successfully participating in the Odyssey competition?

- (A) being able to predict the weather
- (B) being able to work independently
- (C) being in contact with other competitors
- (D) being in the right place at the right time

6 In paragraph 7, what does the word *behemoth* mean?

(A) shifting

(B) enormous

(C) enchanting

(D) comparable

It is Christmas Eve, and the narrator of the short story "Powder" is on a skiing trip with his father. The father has promised the narrator's mother, from whom he is separated, that they will return in time for dinner. Read the passage. Then, answer the questions.

Powder

by Tobias Wolff

¹Just before Christmas my father took me skiing at Mount Baker. He'd had to fight for the privilege of my company, because my mother was still angry with him for sneaking me into a nightclub during his last visit, to see Thelonious Monk¹.

²He wouldn't give up. He promised, hand on heart, to take good care of me and have me home for dinner on Christmas Eve, and she relented. But as we were checking out of the lodge that morning it began to snow, and in this snow he observed some rare quality that made it necessary for us to get in one last run. We got in several last runs. He was indifferent to my fretting. Snow whirled around us in bitter, blinding squalls, hissing like sand, and still we skied. As the lift bore us to the peak yet again, my father looked at his watch and said, "Criminy. This'll have to be a fast one."

³By now I couldn't see the trail. There was no point in trying. I stuck close behind him and did what he did and somehow made it to the bottom without sailing off a cliff. We returned our skis and my father put chains on the Austin-Healey² while I swayed from foot to foot, clapping my mittens and wishing I was home. I could see everything. The green tablecloth, the plates with the holly pattern, the red candles waiting to be lit.

⁴We passed a diner on our way out. "You want some soup?" my father asked. I shook my head. "Buck up," he said. "I'll get you there. Right, doctor?"

⁵I was supposed to say, "Right, doctor," but I didn't say anything.

⁶A state trooper waved us down outside the resort, where a pair of sawhorses blocked the road. He came up to our car and bent down to my father's window, his face bleached by the cold, snowflakes clinging to his eyebrows and to the fur trim of his jacket and cap.

⁷"Don't tell me," my father said.

⁸The trooper told him. The road was closed. It might get cleared, it might not. Storm took everyone by surprise. Hard to get people moving. Christmas Eve. What can you do.

⁹My father said, "Look. We're talking about five, six inches. I've taken this car through worse than that."

¹⁰The trooper straightened up. His face was out of sight but I could hear him. "The road is closed." It is Christmas Eve, and the narrator of the short story "Powder" is on a skiing trip with his father. The father has promised the narrator's mother, from whom he is separated, that they will return in time for dinner.

¹¹My father sat with both hands on the wheel, rubbing the wood with his thumbs. He looked at the barricade for a long time. He seemed to be trying to master the idea of it. Then he thanked the trooper and with a weird, old-maidy show of caution turned the car around. "Your mother will never forgive me for this," he said.

¹²"We should've left this morning," I said. "Doctor."

¹³He didn't speak to me again until we were in a booth at the diner, waiting for our burgers. "She won't forgive me," he said. "Do you understand? Never."

¹⁴"I guess," I said, though no guesswork was required. She wouldn't forgive him.

15 “I can’t let that happen.” He bent toward me. “I’ll tell you what I want. I want us all to be together again. Is that what you want?”

16 “Yes, sir.”

17 He bumped my chin with his knuckles. “That’s all I needed to hear.”

18 When we finished eating he went to the pay phone in the back of the diner, then joined me in the booth again. I figured he’d called my mother, but he didn’t give a report. He sipped at his coffee and stared out the window at the empty road. “Come on, come on,” he said, though not to me. A little while later he said it again. When the trooper’s car went past, lights flashing, he got up and dropped some money on the check. “Okay. Vámonos.”

19 The wind had died. The snow was falling straight down, less of it now and lighter. We drove away from the resort, right up to the barricade. “Move it,” my father told me. When I looked at him, he said, “What are you waiting for?” I got out and dragged one of the sawhorses aside, then put it back after he drove through. He pushed the door open for me. “Now you’re an accomplice,” he said. “We go down together.” He put the car into gear and gave me a look. “Joke, son.”

20 Down the first long stretch I watched the road behind us, to see if the trooper was on our tail. The barricade vanished. Then there was nothing but snow: snow on the road, snow kicking up from the chains, snow on the trees, snow in the sky, and our trail in the snow. Then I faced forward and had a shock. There were no tracks ahead of us. My father was breaking virgin snow between tall treelines. He was humming “Stars Fell on Alabama.” I felt snow brush along the floorboards under my feet. To keep my hands from shaking I clamped them between my knees.

21 My father grunted thoughtfully and said, “Don’t ever try this yourself.”

22 “I won’t.”

23 “That’s what you say now, but someday you’ll get your license and then you’ll think you can do anything. Only you won’t be able to do this. You need, I don’t know—a certain instinct.”

24 “Maybe I have it.”

25 “You don’t. You have your strong points, sure, just not this. I only mention it because I don’t want you to get the idea this is something anybody can do. I’m a great driver. That’s not a virtue, okay? It’s just a fact, and one you should be aware of. Of course you have to give the old heap some credit too. There aren’t many cars I’d try this with. Listen!”

26 I did listen. I heard the slap of the chains, the stiff, jerky rasp of the wipers, the purr of the engine. It really did purr. The old heap was almost new. My father couldn’t afford it, and kept promising to sell it, but here it was.

27 I said, “Where do you think that policeman went to?”

28 “Are you warm enough?” He reached over and cranked up the blower. Then he turned off the wipers. We didn’t need them. The clouds had brightened. A few sparse, feathery flakes drifted into our slipstream and were swept away. We left the trees and entered a broad field of snow that ran level for a while and then tilted sharply downward. Orange stakes had been planted at intervals in two parallel lines and my father steered a course between them, though they were far enough apart to leave considerable doubt in my mind as to exactly where the road lay. He was humming again, doing little scat riffs around the melody.

29 “Okay, then. What are my strong points?”

30 “Don’t get me started,” he said. “It’d take all day.”

³¹ “Oh, right. Name one.”

³² “Easy. You always think ahead.”

³³ True. I always thought ahead. I was a boy who kept his clothes on numbered hangers to ensure proper rotation. I bothered my teachers for homework assignments far ahead of their due dates so I could draw up schedules. I thought ahead, and that was why I knew there would be other troopers waiting for us at the end of our ride, if we even got there. What I didn’t know was that my father would wheedle and plead his way past them—he didn’t sing “O Tannenbaum,” but just about—and get me home for dinner, buying a little more time before my mother decided to make the split final. I knew we’d get caught; I was resigned to it. And maybe for this reason I stopped moping and began to enjoy myself.

³⁴ Why not? This was one for the books. Like being in a speedboat, only better. You can’t go downhill in a boat. And it was all ours. And it kept coming, the laden trees, the unbroken surface of snow, the sudden white vistas. Here and there I saw hints of the road, ditches, fences, stakes, though not so many that I could have found my own way. But then I didn’t have to. My father was driving. My father in his forty-eighth year, rumped, kind, bankrupt of honor, flushed with certainty. He was a great driver. All persuasion, no coercion. Such subtlety at the wheel, such tactful pedalwork. I actually trusted him. And the best was yet to come—switchbacks and hairpins impossible to describe. Except maybe to say this: if you haven’t driven fresh powder, you haven’t driven.

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1 *Thelonious Monk* - a famous American jazz pianist popular in the 1950s and 1960s

2 *Austin - Healey* — a British sports car

7 In paragraph 33, the narrator says his “father would wheedle and plead his way past” the troopers. Based on the paragraph, *wheedling* is a kind of

- (A) apology.
- (B) persuasion.
- (C) aggression.
- (D) entertainment.

8 What does the narrator's mother **mainly** represent in the story?

- (A) the spirit of hope
- (B) the beauty of nature
- (C) the certainty of loss and death
- (D) the real world and its demands

9 Based on paragraph 34, what does the drive through the fresh powder **most likely** symbolize?

- (A) accepting society's limitations
- (B) disappointing one's relatives
- (C) navigating life's challenges
- (D) discovering one's purpose

10 Based on paragraphs 27 and 28, what is the **main** reason the father asks the narrator whether he is warm enough?

- (A) He has been mean to the narrator.
- (B) He notices that the storm is getting worse.
- (C) He wants to show that he regrets ruining the day.
- (D) He wants to distract the narrator from thinking about getting in trouble.

11 Read paragraph 12 below.

“We should’ve left this morning,” I said. “Doctor.”

What is the narrator’s tone when he says, “Doctor”?

- (A) polite
- (B) sarcastic
- (C) confused
- (D) sympathetic

12 What does paragraph 1 suggest about the narrator's father?

- (A) He is not a strict parent.
- (B) He is not fond of holiday music.
- (C) He enjoys making his wife upset.
- (D) He has good feelings about the holidays.